

Remarks at the Memorial Service at Patrick Air Force Base, Florida, for
American Servicemen Killed in Saudi Arabia
June 30, 1996

Governor Chiles, Lieutenant Governor MacKay, Congressman King, Congressman Weldon, General Shalikashvili, Secretary White, Secretary Widnall, General Fogleman, Under Secretary de Leon, General Hawley, General Hinson, Colonel Carr, Colonel Friers, Lieutenant Colonel Holliday, Lieutenant Colonel Jozayt, Chaplain Nguyen, and Chief Graves; to the wounded airmen who are here, whose survival we give thanks for; to the families and friends of those we come to honor.

Today, in this place, we honor seven sons of America who sacrificed their lives in the service of our Nation. To their loved ones and their friends and their families and to their family here at Patrick, I know I bring the thoughts and the prayers of all Americans with me. As one we mourn your loss, we share your grief, we thank God for the lives of your loved ones.

Five of our fallen sons come from this base. They were pilots and navigators, communicators and engineers. Each was a part of the 71st Rescue Squadron, whose motto hangs especially heavy on our hearts today, "So that others may live." Two others came from further away, but they, too, are now back home in this land that they loved and that they gave everything to defend.

To the families and the loved ones of these fine men, I say I know well that no one can ever make whole the loss of your father, your husband, your brother or son, your fiancé, or your best friend. But I do hope you can find some solace in the strength they showed every day, in the pride they took in their work, in the love and respect they engendered from so many others, love and respect which surround you today.

They were extraordinary Americans who made a difference. They made a difference in Operation Desert Storm. Afterward they made a difference in enforcing the no-fly zone over Iraq, in helping to defend Iraq's neighbors. They made a difference in Bosnia, delivering plane-load after plane-load of food and equipment and medicine, allowing the people of Bosnia the chance to rebuild their lives and their land. They made a difference in seeking for others

the blessings of liberty we hold so dear. And they made a difference in smaller ways, teaching others their hard-won skills, taking care of their crews, giving a helping hand, lending a sympathetic ear.

They were of diverse races and regions and religions and ethnic groups. But to the man, they were liked by their peers, loved by their families, admired by their communities. And they were united in their love of country and the mission they assumed. They represented the best of our Nation, and they gave America their best.

Let me say to their families and friends, as I did who mourned the 12 Americans from Eglin Air Force Base who also lost their lives in Dhahran: America stands with you in your sorrow and in your outrage. Your loved ones were taken before their time, felled by the hands of hatred in an act whose savagery is matched only by its cowardice. We will not rest until our efforts to capture, prosecute, and punish those who did this evil deed are successful.

But today let us just for a moment put aside our anger to remember those who were lost, to find strength in the service they gave, to thank God for the lives that they did live, and to resolve to continue the struggle for freedom and decency to which they were so devoted.

We are blessed to live in a prosperous land at a time of peace. But we see here again today, in heartbreaking reality, that this time is not free of peril. While the modern world opens many new opportunities to us, it also opens us to the forces of intolerance and destruction and especially to the forces of terrorism that are so often rooted in ethnic and religious hatred. We know now painfully that terrorists can strike anywhere, from a subway in Tokyo to the streets of London, from the sacred ground of the Holy Land to the World Trade Center in New York and Oklahoma City and now in Saudi Arabia.

My fellow Americans, during the long struggles of World War II and the cold war, our Nation stood fast for freedom. In our time, terrorism is the enemy of peace and freedom. America must not and America will not be driven from the fight against terrorism. In this ef-

fort, every American must stand with the men and women of our armed services. Every American must stand against violence and hatred and stand for dignity and tolerance, at home as well as abroad. We must honor the memory of those we have lost by upholding the ideals for which they lived and the mission for which they gave their lives.

The men we mourn today made the most of their lives. And they made all the rest of our lives richer and safer. We are the poorer for their passing. But the bright light of their devotion still shines. May their names live on forever. May we never forget Captain Christopher Adams, Captain Leland Haun, Master Sergeant Michael Heiser, Staff Sergeant Kevin Johnson, Airman First Class Justin Wood, Staff Sergeant Ronald King, and Airman Christopher Lester.

They gave their lives for our freedom. May they now rest in the warm embrace of God. May God bring peace to their families and their loved ones. And may God bless the country for which they gave the last full measure of their devotion. Amen.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3 p.m. in the theater. In his remarks, he referred to Brig. Gen. Robert C. Hinson, USAF, Commander, Col. Patrick Carr, USAF, Vice Commander, and Chief Master Sgt. David Graves, USAF, Senior Enlisted Adviser, 45th Space Wing; Lt. Col. Tom Friers, USAF, Commander, and Lt. Col. Robert Holliway, USAF, Deputy Commander, 1st Rescue Group; Lt. Col. Donald R. Jozayt, USAF, Commander, 71st Rescue Squadron; and Capt. Philip Nguyen, USAF, base chaplain.